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ABSTRACT

The literature found in current journals, periodicals, theses, books and other media was reviewed to study the use/abuse of drugs as an indicator of the bilingual/bicultural assimilation difficulties of Mexican Americans as they coped with the Anglo-American mainstream. Three areas were emphasized: (1) the general characteristics of the drug user/abuser and his culture, (2) whether the Chicano tended to "fit" the pattern of the typical drug user/abuser, and (3) the possible means of therapy for the Mexican American drug user/abuser and the role of the American educational system. The study indicated that the personality qualities and environmental descriptors that were most likely to produce a drug user included conflict of values, poor self image, ethnicity, passive nature, and group pressures. Such a profile impacts heavily on those of a bicultural heritage. The Chicano does face a conflict of values as he is caught between the Anglo and Chicano worlds. Because he is neither Anglo nor Mexican, his ethnicity can produce a poor self image. His need to belong to a group will sometimes place him in a situation where his passive nature, impulsiveness and need to belong may lead him into the drug subculture. Effective therapy should be based on solving problems in a family context, maintaining dignity, and especially on grounding program definitions, concepts, practices and language in the Chicano culture and with a Chicano staff. (DS)

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PROBLEM: THE USE/ABUSE OF DRUGS AS AN INDICATOR OF THE BILINGUAL/BICULTURAL ASSIMILATION DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY MEXICAN-AMERICANS COPING WITH THE ANGLO-AMERICAN MAINSTREAM--A LITERATURE REVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

Drug use/abuse is one of the more significant problems impacting on the contemporary American educational scene. Younger and larger numbers of students in the American schools are using non-medicinal drugs as indicated by Mann (1979). With more persons entering the drug subculture, the question of the impact of this usage upon ethnic groups in general, and Mexican-Americans in particular, is of concern.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The problem under consideration is the use/abuse of drugs as an indicator of the bilingual/bicultural assimilation difficulties encountered by the Mexican-Americans (Chicanos) coping with the Anglo-American mainstream. The methodology used for this project was a review of some of the literature found in current journals, periodicals, theses, books, and other media formats.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM:

The problem was studied from three angles. First the writer sought literature that portrayed the general characteristics of the drug user/abuser and his culture. Of concern to the writer was to ascertain if a personality

pattern of the "typical drug user/abuser did tend to emerge. Secondly, did the Chicano drug user/abuser tend to "fit" the emergent pattern? The third area was the possible means of therapy for the Mexican-American drug user/abuser and the role of the American educational system in this situation.

DEFINITIONS:

1. Anglo-American - white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant
2. Drugs - alcohol and narcotics, used for non-medicinal purposes
3. Mexican-American (Chicano) - a person who had(has) ancestors who came from Mexico
4. Substance use - drug use

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DRUG USER/ABUSER

According to Wright (1977), in many instances the use of drugs begins at the age of thirteen with the use of alcohol. The reasons for turning to drugs as indicated by Wright (1977) are as follows:

1. Availability and curiosity
2. Breakdown of relationship with parents
3. Need for acceptance
4. Lack of love and understanding
5. Environmental pressure
6. Peer pressure
7. Boredom
8. Poor self image
9. Social inequities
10. Fundamentally it (drug use) is a psychological problem relative to a conflict of values. (p.401)

Wright further contends that drug addition is contageous and will spread through peer groups, friends and families.

Dembo (1977) found that poor self-image is related to drug abuse. Socio-cultural theories of drug use assert that the factors of background, cultural experience and social context are essential to the understanding of the process by which substance relationships are established and maintained. Continuing to complement Wright, Dembo further asserted that substance (drug) taking reflected values and styles of life that are found among different ethnic groups. Ethnicity interacts with the youngsters' environment and attitude/value characteristics in predicting their drug involvement. Thus ethnicity is an important

factor in understanding the youngsters' substance use. The magnitude of the discrepancy between the self and the ideal self-concept is regarded as an index of self-esteem or self-acceptance. According to Dembo (1977):

> "The present study, assessing the extent to which values relevant to drug involvement among youths is an inner-city environment are associated with their self-perceptions and drug use, was able to manage some of the theoretical and methodological shortcomings of traditional self-concept drug use research. The results have important implications for: 1) understanding how the use of substances relates to the kinds of adaptations the youths must make to the social setting in which they live and 2) drug education and prevention efforts."(p.6)

Dembo (1977) found that:

> "....the relationship of the boys' and girls' self-image clusters to their background, attitude/value characteristics and their substance involvement.....while ethnicity did not relate directly to the youths' drug involvement, it interacted with other factors, such as school grades, perceived relationship with parents and attitude to school in predicting substance use." (p.18)

Essentially, Dembo (1977) found that social identification for boys and girls in his study had severe limitations. Thus the students sought identification through the drug culture or leader/gang situations.

According to "Viewpoints" (1977), a listing of forces which cause children to use drugs are the same as those potent needs which motivate all behavior. There are:

> ".the need to be accepted,
> .the need to belong,

.the need to be loved,
.the need to love
.the need to express oneself,
.the need to be important,
.the need to gain recognition." (p.10)

Replicating the Dembo study, "Viewpoints" (1977), restates the importance of self-concept or how one may see oneself in various situations. The star of every communication is the self. A strong self concept is necessary for healthy and satisfying interaction. A weak self concept, on the other hand, often distorts one's perception of how others view him. According to "Viewpoints" (1977):

> "Self-concept is probably the most important factor in determining whether or not an individual will choose or be persuaded into misusing drugs. It will directly affect how a person communicates, what decisions he makes and which values he will choose." (p.13)

Value clarification is stressed by "Viewpoints" (1977) as an attempt to aid the young in answering some of their questions regarding a belief system. Additionally, the youth needs to be aided in making positive decisions. The channels of communication among the school, the larger society and the student need to be kept open. Schools should encourage development of positive self-concepts and create drug education programs.

Impulsiveness was not reduced in samples of drug abusers either in the therapeutic community or in prison (Skolnick 1979). It was recommended that the treatment of

drug abuse place more emphasis on control of impulsive behavior. Weiss (1977) reported that drug abusers tend to be passive. Passive and impulsive are two traits that may appear in the same individual and certainly within the same group. Persistent passivity may erupt in impulsive behavior.

Kaestner (1977) indicated that ethnicity is significantly related to the number and types of drug used in a population of urban heroin addicts. A relationship between anxiety and drug use existed. Kaestner concluded that knowledge of the subjects' ethnic background was the best indicator of number and types of drugs used. Anxiety and sensation seeking character traits were found to contribute to drug use.

Huba (1979) study sought to determine if a link existed between use of drugs and interaction patterns. There is a general drug subculture. Lastly, was there a specific pattern of relationships that would aid in determining some interpersonal norms in the subculture? The findings showed that this study replicated other studies. There was not a single, general drug culture that adolescents entered and remained in as they increased their use/abuse of drugs. Rather through the various groups with which the individual interacted, such as friends, peers, family, the individual progressed from experimentation to chronic drug abuse.

THE CHICANO DRUG USER/ABUSER

In his thesis, Reyes (1957) surveyed a number of problems confronting the Mexican-American. He indicated that the culture of the Mexican-American was viewed by the dominate cultural group as being unstable and thus possibly a threat to the existing order. The traditional codes of conduct of the Mexican-American that include honor, dignity, respect for authority and cooperation among the group were cause for frustration as the Mexican-American attempted to wind his path between two worlds. Seeking outlets for his frustration, the Mexican-American, according to Reyes (1957) vented his resentment of mainstream America by:

"1. Rejection of U.S. citizenship
2. Refusal to learn English
3. Resistance to American customs
4. Refusal to change traditional diet
5. Resistance to be educated in American ways
6. Expression of hostility toward other minority groups
7. Harshness in the home." (p.31)

A byproduct of the socially unacceptable behavior or passive resistance exhibited by the Mexican-American is a high crime and delinquency rate in proportion to the numbers of Mexican-Americans in the U.S. population. Reyes (1957) suggests that socially acceptable behaviors be taught. Additionally, he suggests that the practice of English usage be encouraged. The role of the American educational system should include instruction for Mexican-Americans in the wise use of leisure and American expectations of all its citizens. However, Reyes maintains that before American

educational practices can aid the Mexican-American, the factors that create frustration for the Mexican-American must first be removed from the situation.

Morales (1979) indicated that a lengthy listing of social problems confront the Mexican-American in the bilingual/bicultural situation of his daily life. These problems are:

> "1. Deficient educational achievement due to lack of educational opportunities.
> 2. Excessive unemployment
> 3. Broken homes
> 4. Excessive numbers of police in Chicano communities.
> 5. Police-community friction
> 6. Overrepresentation of Mexican-Americans in jails and prisons for offenses related to drinking and drugs.
> 7. Gross lack of mental health treatment facilities in the Chicano communities.
> 8. General unavailablility of psychiatric manpower particularly bilingual mental health professionals.
> 9. Societal resistance toward the funding of community mental health centers directed by and under the control of the Mexican-American community." (p. 211)

Morales further contended that excessive use of liquor was/is the Mexican's greatest moral problem. At the present, indications are that over fifty percent of all offenses in the Mexican-American community of East Los Angeles can be attributed to drunkedness or drunken driving. The Manpower Report of the President (1970) supports the Morales study. The report agrees that unemployment is very high among the Spanish-speaking in the United States. The report also states that the Spanish-American language and cultural differences are among the causes for the prejudice and

unequal treatment that Spanish-Americans often encounter in the labor market.

According to Reilly (1979) the American educational system often impacts negatively upon the Chicano student. School frequently supports the concept of the Chicano that he does not fit into the educational system. Feeling out of place adds to the Chicano's poor self-image. Not being comfortable in the alien surroundings of the school, the Mexican-American student finds his situation extremely difficult. While traditionally the Mexican child finds comfort in the extended family, he faces rejection in the alien world of the Anglo-American, according to Weiser (1978). The Chicano feels ambivalent about himself, his identity and cultural values. His traditions are at odds with the mainstream concepts of materialism, acquisitiveness and conformity.

Guinn (1975) investigated Mexican-American drug use in relationship to socio-economic status, attitude toward drugs, school-related variables and demographic factors. He found that an abuser was from a higher economic status than the norm. In addition, there existed a lack of stability in the environment of the Chicano user. The Chicano user was apt to like school less than his Anglo-American counterpart. In numerous instances school was a source of boredom for the Mexican-American. He participated

very little in the activities of the school. The transition from the traditions of his native culture to the Anglo-American educational system left him like a fish without water. Therefore, the Guinn study supports the findings of Morales (1976).

Scott (1975) found in his study of methadone treatment that among the sample, heroin was no longer a significant problem, and that the overall health of the sample did improve. However, it appeared that the heroin user had exchanged one addiction for another and used excessive quantities of alcohol. Alcoholism was the major health complication. Follow-up studies of records of addicts, environmental factors associated with addiction and abundance of family resources indicated somewhat modest social rehabilitation.

Crowther (1972), by means of interviews, attempted to compare patterns of drug use for Chicanos and for Anglo-Americans. The Mexican-Americans showed less experimentation in drug use than the Anglo-Americans. The most typical drug use pattern among Chicanos was marijuana as a first drug followed by heroin. Comparative cultural differences between Chicano users and Anglo-American users suggest differences in perceptions of the value of drugs.

Maril (1979) studied Mexican-American women's drinking habits. Findings were that the women who drank were more apt to be better educated, married and less than fifty years

old than non-drinkers. Relatively few Mexican-American women were reported as drinkers due to the existence of a double standard in Chicano society. Drinking was/is primarily a male Chicano attribute. The more Americanized the Chicano women became, the more they were apt to adapt the drinking habits and patterns of Anglo-American women as indicated in the Gilbert (1978) study. Traditionally, Mexican-American men drink in public. Mexican-American women do not.

Grebler (1970) supports the Morales contention that there is excessive numbers of police in the Chicano community. Grebler cites as possible reasons for this phenomona, two facts relative to the Mexican-American drug problem. First the Mexican-American may be an "illegal"; secondly, until very recently the traffic in narcotics was defined in many areas of the Southwest as almost entirely a Mexican problem.

THERAPY PROPOSALS FOR THE CHICANO DRUG USE/ABUSE SITUATION

Paine (1977) ascertained that an effective program must understand the Mexican-American culture and the manner in which it is an environmentally distinct community. The effects of the language, belief system, values, mobility and problems of assimilation that result from bicultural/bilingualism must be understood. As indicated in the Gilbert (1978) study and replicated here, drinking alcohol is an

activity reserved for the Chicano male. Pride is an important virtue to the Chicano male. The family is basically authoritarian. When the drinking pattern of the male creates difficulties in the home, legal, family and economic problems may result. Paine (1977) found that to cope with the problems that resulted from drinking, the Chicanos wanted a clinic in the neighborhood with counselors of Chicano heritage. In order to maintain the dignity of the home, the Chicano male with problems preferred attending sessions at the clinic rather than having the counselor go to his home.

According to Paine, the Chicano feels himself to be an integral part of his family and his behavior reflects upon the family. The Chicano attitude magnifies any feeling relative to the possibility that he has disappointed his family. In spite of individual preference to attend sessions at a location other than his home, yet within his community, the Chicano's preference is to solve his problems in a family context. Special cultural characteristics directly affect the impact of outreach programs and their treatment effect.

The Chicano family structure and system of maintenance depend heavily on a hierarchy of power. This hierarchy is based on birthright and sex. Authority in the family is vested in males and among the elders. Disequilibrium in the family is attributed to the father's drinking problem. The hierarchy becomes less effective due to loss of respect for the father. At the same time, a request for assistance

will be viewed as a challenge to the authority of the father. According to Paine, loss of respect does not bring loss of authority as expected.

The Chicano family boundary discourages intrusion by outsiders. Services for alcohol abuse treatment need to have credibility within the community. The bicultural nature of the Chicano requires that dignity be maintained and at the same time to request aid is an indication of weakness. Thus, alcohol use is both culturally integrated and socially problematic as indicated by Paine (1977). Biculturalism reaffirms the culture of the group. Help must come with sensitivity to the unique needs of the Chicano culture as it is superimposed upon the mainstream Anglo culture.

Aron (1974) revealed that 82% of adult offenders arrested for burglary in the Mexican-American community of Ventura County had prior arrest records for narcotic abuse. Within Ventura County, as in numerous bicultural/bilingual communities, there exists a cycle of poverty which is isolated from the general stream of economic progress. The cycle perpetuates itself, being self-generating and caught up in its own momentum.

In dealing with bilingual persons, in this situation, the Chicano, the prohibition of the use of Spanish reaffirms feeling of inferiority of the individual Chicano. In the establishment of treatment facilities for Chicano drug abusers,

it is important to provide "separate" facilities based upon the Spanish/Mexican traditions. Therapy is a verbal activiity. The art of talking is a culture specific. Therefore, according to Aron (1974) there is an urgent need for separate addiction treatment programs for Chicanos. Effectiveness of the program will be more feasible when the definitions, concepts, practices and language are grounded in the Chicano culture with a Chicano staff.

According to Aron (1974) Chicanos prefer their own programs. The cultural heritage of any individual is an important aspect of his definition of self. Job training as a means to divorce the Chicano from his addiction was proposed by Aron as an aspect of treatment of addiction. Job training complies with the findings of the Manpower Report of the President (1973). In this report, the following situation existed in the American communities in which Spanish was the prime language. The persons had low incomes, large families, low education levels, poor jobs and many families had female heads of household. In the report continued emphasis on education and job training were given emphasis to improve the economic status of the Spanish-speaking minorities.

The Scott (1973) study reasoned that the Chicano addict had turned to crime to support his heroin habit. The conclusion of his study decried the lack of descriptions of Chicano addiction, causes and impact in the literature. The

lack was unique because of the common assumption that addictive problems are widespread among the Spanish speaking communities in Anglo-American culture, including the Chicano community.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY:

From the general characteristics of the drug user/abuser emerges a profile of personality qualities and environment descriptors that are most likely to produce a drug user. The profile that emerges impacts heavily upon those of a bicultural heritage as evident in the Chicano culture. Criteria for predisposition toward drug use includes a conflict of values. With a foot in each of two worlds, the Chicano deals daily with this conflict. Being neither Anglo nor Mexican, the Chicano finds himself in a situation where his ethnicity produces a poor self-concept or self-image.

The need to belong to a group and to be a part of some culture may lead the Chicano to seek the communion of his peers or friends. If the group sought out is active in the drug subculture, he will be indoctrinated into the situation. This membership will satisfy his need to belong and to feel important, since his passive nature permits him to be led and his impulsiveness allows the leading to be toward a drug subculture.

The dominate culture patterns and social institutions including the educational system do not meet the needs of

the Chicano. He feels that he cannot trust a culture nor a school which enhances his negative self concept. Communication is a problem. The home does not fulfill his needs as he reaches out to become part of the mainstream and feels impatient with his transitional status. The offerings of the drug subculture may seem to be the only available 'institution' opened to him.

The problem of the Chicano attempting to live in two worlds and to find his identity in either or both can undermine the authority of the home as well as the respect for its traditions. The school has not met his needs in the past due to lack of understanding and communication complexities. Educational programs geared to bilingual/bicultural persons provide the best hope for avoiding Chicano admission into the drug subculture.

CONCLUSION:

Further study needs to be undertaken to resolve the drug dilemma that impacts upon the Chicano as he seeks identification and attempts to become acculturated into the mainstream of the alien dominate society in which he lives. The schools can develop deeper understanding of the problems confronting the Chicano and implement the acquired understandings. The literature supports the contention that therapy programs in order to be most effective should be within the context of the Chicano culture and language.

Too often we say to the Chicano, come to our programs. Perhaps the answer is to take our institutions and programs to the Chicano community complete with bilingual/bicultural counselors or instructors or leaders.

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